

## The Farm.

Speech of the Hon. Judge Peters.

OF P. E. ISLAND.

The following excellent Speech was delivered by the Hon. Judge Peters to the Royal Agricultural Society of Prince Edward Island, on the occasion of its late Grain Show :-

GENTLEMEN;

This is the fourth anniversary of this Society, and we have great reason to congratulate ourselves on its success; as in most undertakings of this kind, we had much prejudice to encounter and many difficulties to contend with; but by perseverance and an earnest desire to do good, the last have been overcome and the axe has been laid to the tree of prejudice, and its roots shaken in soils where they seemed too firmly embedded to be moved. In proof, let any one compare the present state of this country with its condition four years ago; what a change! I do not intend to claim credit for the Society for all the improvements which have taken place, but I do say, that it has a large share in producing many of them; witness the improvement in all the most important branches of rural economy; carry back your recollection to our last cattle show and compare it with any that preceded it, or travel through the country and mark how in every settlement you will find young stock rising up, superior to anything you could have found a few years ago; this may be traced not only to the large importations of stock we have made, but to the judicious plan adopted by the Society of purchasing up their male progeny and distributing them at half-price to farmers throughout the Island; successful as this plan has been, at its commencement so great was the apathy among farmers, that we had to beg them to accept, instead of their being anxious to avail themselves of its advantages, although now convinced of its benefits, the demand is greater than we can supply. Let all who would combat error for public good be encouraged by this to persevere, though their best laid plans do not at first prove successful. Again compare the breadth of turnip culture now with its extent a few years since: which—(I can never lose an opportunity of repeating)—is the foundation on which all agricultural improvements must be based. Look also at the small price of hay, and the improved quality of meat, not in the butchers' stalls, but on the farmers' sleds—two barometers by which agricultural improvement is correctly registered.—But we have done more, we have also sown the seed of more lasting improvement. We have created a desire for agricultural knowledge. Let those who can, deny my assertion. What farmer does not now feel at least some curiosity to look into agricultural publications? Or, if he takes up a paper with some article on agriculture, does he not peruse it with greater interest than formerly? I am not ignorant of the prejudice and contempt still entertained for book-farming. Reason and experience both tell me that no man can become a farmer merely by reading books; but they also tell me that no man will become a very good one who does not. Why should farmers reject them? Of what is the largest portion of those books composed? The recorded experience of practical men like themselves. Suppose some farmer should rise in this meeting and tell us of some valuable discovery he had made. If we knew him to be experienced and prudent, would we not listen to him with attention, and try what he recommended? If, instead of that, he should write it, and it become more generally diffused by the press, would you deem the information less valuable because it appeared in a book?

But the discoveries of science are also useful. I do not mean that the farmer should be a chemist; that he should be able to analyse his soil, or the plants that grow upon it; or that he should puzzle his brain by trying to comprehend the terms in which science delights to deck her communications. I know that when she first comes forth from the laboratory, she is often arrayed in a language unintelligible to the many; but she soon becomes denuded of her mysterious vestments, and clothed in more homely robes, she becomes popularized by the press, and by those publications in which scientific knowledge is now rendered plain, and widely diffused through the masses of the people. And why should farmers close their ears to her counsels? Surely man was not endowed with these faculties—which enable him, by analysing soils and plants, to search into the mysteries of nature,

and which enable science to make her wonderful discoveries—merely to gratify an idle curiosity? No! Not one of the discoveries he is permitted to make but tends, in some way or other, to ameliorate the condition of mankind. And by far the greater portion of them tend directly or indirectly to the benefit of the tillers of the soil. But this branch of the Society's mission is perhaps nearly accomplished. Here we could be but the pioneers to more skilful instructors. When a road is opened through the wilderness, the axeman goes as the pioneer, he cuts down the trees and extirpates some of the roots, but he leaves a rugged and uninviting road behind him. The skilful engineer follows on his track, removes all obstructions, completes the work and renders the way enticing to the traveller. So it is with us. We have swamped a road through the wilderness of prejudice,—we have felled some of its trees and shaken many of its roots,—but like the axeman's, our road is uninviting, and who can wonder that many refuse to travel with us on it. But the wisdom of the Legislature has provided the skilful engineer to follow us. By a provision of the School Act—the wisest, the noblest, the best that ever graced the Statute of this Island—an instructor is provided, who, stored with scientific knowledge himself, will be able to convey his discoveries in plain and simple language to the most unlearned. The schoolmaster is abroad, and who in these enlightened days does not pray that his travels may be widely extended. But, thanks to this provision, in future he goes not alone. The agricultural instructor will perambulate the country with him; the errors of the existing system will be remedied; agricultural instruction will be mingled with general knowledge; and the rising generation provided with information applicable to the calling which most of them are destined to follow. There is one fault, however, in this Act, which a stroke or two of the pen can alter: no master should be henceforth allowed to pass the board unless acquainted with the rudiments of agricultural chemistry; and as an inducement to him to excel, eight or ten premiums, from ten pounds and downwards, to those masters who should be best qualified to give agricultural instruction, and whose scholars should show the greatest proficiency in that branch of knowledge, would, I think, have a most beneficial effect.

But I must pass on to the prospects before us. Since we last met, Electricity—that wonderful and mysterious agent which man is permitted to use, but whose nature man cannot define, which sends our thoughts along the electric wire a thousand miles, almost as quickly as they are conceived—has commenced its operations amongst us. The spirit of enterprise and the hand of skill have erected the Electric Telegraph, and thus put our thoughts in connection with the world. But, you will ask me, how can this benefit the farmers? I answer, most materially. You live in a commercial age. Commerce is accomplishing her mission—

"To associate all the nations of mankind."

To give the pole the produce of the sun,  
"And knit unsocial climates into one."

Thought flies on the electric wire—steam and railroads annihilate space.

"Each climate needs what other climes produce,  
"And offers something to the general use."

Productions of the remotest countries are interchanged by the activity of trade, and P. E. Island must now be drawn within its vortex. Our farmers must no longer imagine that they produce merely for home consumption, or to supply the lumberers of Miramichi and Restigouche—or that the produce of their labor and their toil is to be sacrificed in the too often glutted markets of Halifax and Newfoundland. The farmer must in future consider the world as his market. At the same time that he can trace his meat to the markets of Great Britain, he will find his grain in those of Philadelphia, New York and Boston, or feeding the horses on the Sacramento, or at the Australian diggings. But I am to answer the question, How will the electric telegraph benefit the farmer? Quick communication is the life of trade,—merchants sometimes want forecast as well as others, or demands suddenly arise. Suppose a merchant in the States suddenly requires 10,000 bushels of oats,—he knows that our Island can supply them; but the season is advanced, and he knows that the icy girdle which in winter encircles our shores may seal up our harbours before his orders can be transmitted by the Mail; and he therefore looks elsewhere

for a supply. But the electric telegraph relieves him from the difficulty: no sooner does the want arise, but his agent here is asked if he can meet it—in an hour the answer "yes" is returned, and before his letter could have arrived by the Mail, the produce of your industry has freighted the vessel which is conveying it to its destination. The market here is relieved from what might have glutted it during the winter,—and brisk demand and steady prices for the farmer is the result. The railroad in the neighbouring Provinces will also throw great advantages in our way. Before next month some thousands of workmen will be crossing the ocean to commence operations at Shediac,—they bring their wives and their families with them—a large number of people must be fed within a few hour's sail of our shores. What will be the effect? Fat oxen, sheep and calves, butter, eggs and cheese, will find a ready market. But this is the least of the advantages that will arise from it. The waters of the St Lawrence and the Bay of Fundy connected by Railroads, St. John and the cities of the United States will be put into close communication with us. New impulses will thus be given to all the springs of our productive industry, and no class will benefit more than the farmers I am now addressing. The salubrity of our climate too is so inviting, that many a wealthy man from the South, whom heat and diseases, to which we are strangers, drive from his home, will come to renovate his health and spend a few months with us, by which means many a dollar will be circulated among you. Those Provinces, with patriotic spirit, are binding a load of debt around their necks, which even their energies may with difficulty sustain; but we may congratulate ourselves on having all the advantages, without any portion of the risk. Gentlemen, I think the circumstances to which I have alluded, justify the high anticipations I entertain of our future prosperity.

I will now allude to one or two subjects on which, I think, Legislative action is required. In our report of last year we recommended a bounty on meat exported to Great Britain for sale. Farm as well as we may, this Island will never be a grazing country. Horses, sheep and pigs are the stock to which our farmers' attention may be most profitably given. No part of America can exceed us in pork-making produce; pork must, therefore, always be one of our staple productions. The United States will furnish the chief market for our grain,—but the markets of Great Britain will furnish the surest and most steady outlet for our pork. To be fitted for that market it must be packed in a different manner from that in which we have been accustomed to put it up for the neighbouring Colonies. Something is wanted to induce the meat merchant to spring up among us. Bounties are objected to on the ground that a trade which will not sustain itself is not worth following. This none can deny. But it is a different thing to give a premium to commence a trade which will amply afterwards sustain itself. Though our fish bounties have proved a failure, our Legislature should not be deterred from trying what they may effect by bounties in a different channel.

But there is something else which I wish to impress on farmers and all others. Whatever may be the salubrity of our climate and the fertility of our soil—however great the advantages which nature and surrounding circumstances may thrust in our way—however great the benefits to be derived from the diffusion of agricultural instruction, and the introduction of improved systems,—these will fall short in effecting the extensive and permanent benefits they are calculated to produce, unless, at the same time, you induce the farmer and all other classes of the community to entertain a proper estimate of the dignity and importance of his noble avocation. It is an impression as erroneous as it is common, and as pernicious as it is, that the physical, not the mental, powers are called into action by agricultural pursuits; and that while the one is tasked beyond what it can bear, the other—the higher and nobler powers with which God has endowed man—may be allowed to slumber, because there is nothing on which they can exert their influence. That the farmer's is a work of the hand and not of the head—to plough, to reap and to sow, constitute his sole occupation—and that when a man can do these passing well, he may set himself down and exclaim, I am a farmer! Hence, he is accustomed to look on his as a laborious and lowly calling. Hence, he would often gladly escape from it himself; or if he has a son, the budding of whose youthful

mind gladdens the father's heart with the promise of a superior intelligence, he thinks him too good to be a farmer—that his talents would be thrown away if he were condemned to follow his father's avocation, and become a cultivator of the soil. Hence, he sends the youth to become a merchant—a professional man, or to follow some other calling which he foolishly imagines to require more talent, and therefore to be of greater dignity and importance than his own. But he makes a wonderful mistake. No doubt the farmer must toil and labour, and the sweat must often stand upon his brow,—he no more than other classes of mankind can claim exemption from the divine fiat which makes the journey through life, in some way or other, one of labour to us all; but he makes a wonderful mistake when he would consign his employment to a subordinate rank. Is the influence it exerts on the general affairs of men any criterion by which to determine the real importance of a calling? What so extensive as the farmer's? Who is it that consumes three-fourths of the articles which come from the mechanic's shop, and goods from the merchant's warehouse? Who makes the largest demands upon the time, and therefore gives the largest share of employment to professional men? Is it not the farmer? Whose labour and industry is it that furnishes the freights to one half the ships which every breeze impels over the bosom of the ocean? Is it not the farmer's? What class have so large a voice in making those laws which affect our lives and properties, and which exercise so powerful an influence for weal or woe over the dearest interests of us all? How important then that they should be possessed of an extensive intelligence, and duly appreciate both the dignities and responsibilities of their station; and how necessary and prudent in all classes to unite in rescuing their calling from the lowly rank to which it has been consigned, and elevating it to its proper place in the social scale.

But do not suppose that the error I would combat is entirely confined to the humbler classes. It often shews itself in another form amongst highly educated men. Take, for instance, some of the wealthy gentlemen who emigrate to this Island—bringing with them wealth, and what is better, highly cultivated minds and extensive information—men whom we gladly welcome amongst us—whom we rejoice to see identifying their interests with the land of their adoption, and who, mingling themselves with our institutions, both civil and political, give a tone and exercise an influence beneficial to us all. Such a man has, perhaps, been a merchant, or followed some learned profession, and knows nothing about farming; but comes here—purchases a farm—reads a book on agriculture, and rushes into farming—spends as much in two years as would maintain him for ten—gets sick of his new avocation—throws it up in disgust, and then raises the cry that farming won't pay in P. E. Island. No, nor any thing else conducted with equal imprudence. The same man would not have embarked £100 in a trade without knowing where his investments would be realized,—nor expect to succeed as a lawyer or a doctor unless he had previously studied the profession,—yet he does not hesitate to bury hundreds in the soil without knowing how to cultivate the plants, or the processes by which the harvest is to be secured. What is this but the same error in another shape which I condemn in you? He too, with all his acquirements, was infatuated with the idea that any man can at once become a farmer. Had he begun as a scholar, and advanced by degrees, he might, at small expense, have acquired a knowledge of the art, and in the end found it both a profitable and delightful employment. Depend upon it, Agriculture, like every other science, requires to be studied and practised before it can be mastered,—and whether it be the humble and uneducated man, who—turning a deaf ear to the counsels of science—gives to his calling the strength of his hand but not of his head, or the wealthy and educated man, who—relying on his knowledge and his books—fancies that practice and experience are not necessary for him, both are equally mistaken, and both will in the end meet with disappointment, and pay for their folly. Gentlemen, I hope I shall not be misunderstood. I intend not to offend; but to correct error, it must be exposed. I have made some suggestions. My opinion may be erroneous; but the discussions here and elsewhere to which they will give rise may lead to others productive of good; and my object will be attained.